

Romans 6 – “*One and Done; One and Not Done*”
Easter Vigil – March 30, 2024

What is the difference between being a dairy farmer and having your wisdom teeth extracted? Well, you might consider them both to be similarly agonizing tasks, but in different ways. But a further difference is this: the dairy farmer goes out to the barn again and again; morning and evening, day after day, sometimes three times a day. Simply put, the cows don't stay milked. Having your wisdom teeth extracted happens, and its over. Those teeth don't grow back. You don't have to make a return trip to the oral surgeon in six months or a year, or ever. Having your wisdom teeth out, just like getting chicken pox, they say, is a *one and done* task. It doesn't have to be repeated. Milking the cows isn't.

The sacrament of Baptism is closely associated with the celebration of Easter. In the early Church, those who were instructed for membership were received and baptized in an Easter Vigil. It is good for us to consider how Baptism relates to the resurrection of our Lord and applies to our daily life. Using the analogy of our introduction, then, is Baptism a *one and done* task, or is it a *one and not done* task. My answer to that question – really, the Word of God's answer to that question is: it is both.

Let's consider first why baptism is a *one and done task*. And the simplest way to answer that question is to ask, who is the doer of the action in this sacrament? Is it God or is it us? It is God, of course. Romans 6 reminds us that, “*we were buried **with Christ** by baptism into death.*” Do we ever ask a corpse to dig the hole where it will be buried? That's an impossible task. God buries us; that is, just as Jesus was enclosed in the tomb at His burial, we are covered by the waters of baptism. And those waters are saving, sanctifying, purifying waters. They are not just symbolic. The water and the Word of God work together to deliver us from sin, death and the devil. Titus 3 says, “*He saved us; not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.*”

Isn't it clear? God is the doer in Baptism. He drives the verbs. He does the action. And when God is at work, He accomplishes His purposes. What He does is done right. That's why it dismays me so much when people say infant baptism really does no good. What really matters, they falsely say, is that you make a decision for Christ when you are older and then you have to be baptized again. That assertion gives evidence of a mindset that looks at Baptism as symbolic, not sacramental; as the work of man, rather than the work of God. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let me be clear, if you have been baptized in the name of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it only needs to be done once.

Well then how can we say that baptism is a *one and done* task, but yet it is not a *one and done task*? Here is the other side of the coin. Baptism calls us to daily repentance. The

Catechism reminds us that *“the Old Adam in us should by **daily contrition and repentance** be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should **daily emerge** and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”* The Catechism is supporting the assertion of St. Paul. He asks the rhetorical questions, *“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means? How can we who died to sin still live in it. . . so you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”*

We are simultaneously saints and sinners – 100% of both. Sin will not leave our mortal flesh until it is no longer mortal; until the day our body is resurrected and glorified because of the death and resurrection of Christ. But until that Day, while we live here on this fallen earth, we return in repentance again and again to the waters of baptism where God claimed us as His own, with the assurance that we have forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life by His grace through Spirit-empowered faith in Christ.

My beginning analogy, like any attempt to equate something earthly with the spiritual truths of God’s word, falls short. I remember having my wisdom teeth extracted, and it was not a delightful experience. I don’t remember being baptized when I was just two weeks old, but I know it was a delightful experience. It has given me a lifetime of blessings. Those living waters always flow. It’s the same for you. So remember Your baptism. It joins you to Christ. And you can joyfully proclaim and speak to our God, as we just sang, *“Baptized into Your name most holy, O Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I claim a place, though weak and lowly, among Your saints, Your chosen host. Buried with Christ and dead to sin, Your Spirit now shall live within.”* And it does, now and forever, because Christ is Risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

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